

REMARKS

The Office action of June 21, 2004 has been received and its contents carefully noted.

Applicants note the objection to the Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) filed on May 29, 2001. As explained in the telephone conference with the Examiner on August 2, 2004, Applicants' statements regarding non-waiver of confidentiality of the co-pending application are confirmation of the confidentiality rights granted to the Applicants in accordance with 35 U.S.C. § 122 and 37 C.F.R. § 1.14, as Applicants acknowledge that the file wrapper and contents of the application may become accessible to the public upon publication or issuance in accordance with § 1.11 and 1.14.

Claims 1-18 are pending in the application. Claims 15-18 have been added without the addition of any new matter. Applicants note the rejection to Claims 1-14 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. Applicants contend that the § 112 rejection is improper, but have amended these claims for clarity making claims 4-14 allowable in accordance with the Action. Also, regarding the § 112 rejection to Claims 11 and 13, the specification does provide support for these claims on page 88, lines 20-24 to page 89, line 1, for example. Claims 2-3 have been rewritten in independent form making them allowable in accordance with the Action.

Claim 1 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being unpatentable over Handig (U.S. Patent No. 5,857,009). Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections, and requests allowance thereof in the continuation prosecution application for the following reasons.

The Claims are Patentable Over the Cited References

Claim 1 is not anticipated by Handig

Claim 1 stands rejected under § 102(b) in view of Handig. Handig fails to disclose the features recited in these claims as amended such as a digital circuit multiplication equipment equipped with a tandem pass-through function capable of pass-through transmitting a signal, using a trunk channel, connected via an exchange to another digital circuit multiplication equipment.

As clearly shown in Fig. 2, Handig solely communicates directly between a first DCME (DCME_A) and a second DCME (DCME_B) and does not communicate between the two DCME's via an exchange as recited. Specifically, Handig states that "...as shown, a first central office communicates with a second central office through respective DCME_A and DCME_B..." (see FIG. 2; col. 6, lines 6-9).

Handig communicates directly between a first and second DCME which is significantly distinct from a digital circuit multiplication equipment equipped with a tandem pass-through function capable of pass-through transmitting a signal, using a

trunk channel, connected via an exchange to another digital circuit multiplication equipment as recited. The claimed invention communicates between DCME's via an exchange as recited, while in strong contrast Handig communicates between two exchanges via DCME's as disclosed.

Handig fails to disclose a digital circuit multiplication equipment equipped with a tandem pass-through function capable of pass-through transmitting a signal, using a trunk channel, connected via an exchange to another digital circuit multiplication equipment as recited making the claimed invention patentably distinct and non-obvious from the cited reference.

Conclusion

In view of the above amendments and remarks, this application appears to be in condition for allowance and the Examiner is, therefore, requested to reexamine the application and pass the claims to issue.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Clint A. Gerdine (Reg. 41,035) at telephone number (703) 205-8000, which is located in the Washington, DC area.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees

required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachment: Abstract